

Contemporary Public Diplomacy: The Case of China

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Abstract

This article aims to give an understanding of how China is conducting public diplomacy and how it is using its soft power to shape its world future and gain the international identity. It investigates the scope and features of contemporary public diplomacy conducted by China and the efforts that China is making to increase its soft power. It finds that public diplomacy is a foreign policy tool used by the Chinese Government to advance their national interests and achieve their foreign policy goals through gaining influence and creating positive images or attractiveness from other countries as its practitioners categorize public diplomacy as one of the core functions of diplomacy today. This paper finds that increasing the cooperation as well as the number of exchange students has a significant and positive influence on every aspect of its society, its economic growth, and that increasing the incorporation soft power in their public diplomacy has strategic values in gaining both national and international influence, identity and status. This article explains the pros and cons of Chinese public diplomacy, Americans view of China, and also how Public Diplomacy paves the way for innovations in Chinese diplomatic practice.

Keywords: China, public diplomacy, soft power, national & international identity, neighbors,

Introduction

As time passes, we are seeing the world that is chaotically being changed. According to international politics scholars, it is no longer a unipolar world because even the USA finds itself sharing the world stage with a growing cast of states and non-state actors, all with influence enhanced by new information and communication technologies. We are seeing somewhat of a rise of several states so that the USA has more countries with whom it has to share power.

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In particular, the rise of China is something that is important as international relations scholars have argued: the transition of power from west to east has continued.

According to Ben Carson, in every century, there seems to emerge a country with the power, the will, and the intellectual & moral impetus to shape the entire international system in accordance with its own values. Throughout the XIII century, Mongolia, China's nearest neighbor, was the real pinnacle nation in both Asia and Europe. The Mongols once ruled the territories inhabited by both the Russians and the Chinese for almost a century. In its long history spanning almost a millennium, Mongolia occupies a unique place in the geographical heartland of Asia. Surrounded by only two but powerful neighbors – Russia and China, Mongolia has had a peculiar geo-strategic situation of being landlocked.

Throughout the XX century, the USA influenced international relations as decisively and at the same time as ambivalently. This country had the leadership role on the world stage as it has still insisted on the inadmissibility of intervention in the domestic affairs of other states or asserted that its own values were universally applicable. It is asserted that the USA was a moral and prosperous nation as well as a reigning superpower in the XX century and it still is. In reality, many people, especially Chinese or other Asians still want to flee to this country, because they have been convinced that there is no free country they would rather be citizens of and call home than the USA as many of them believe that the USA is "the Promised Land by GOD".

Although the USA is still the pinnacle nation in the world today, there is another global power is rising, which is China. The XXI century perceives the rise of China with an important stake not only in East Asia but also in the whole world. China's public diplomacy and soft power has acquired and continues to possess an attractive quality.

Public diplomacy is increasingly categorized as one of the core functions of diplomacy today. Some of its main features are long-term relationship-building, common wisdom & values, mutual understanding, equal opportunities for everyone, credibility, and power with others not over, as everybody is equal before the Creator, GOD.

When the term 'public diplomacy' was introduced to the global debate, it caught the attention of Chinese politicians, intellectuals, and academics, and they became conversant with the history of Cold War and the use of "soft power" to persuade, cajole, influence and ultimately convince people overseas that democratic ideals and values trump communism. The Chinese fascination with it is the result of the challenges that China faces in exploring its international status – that is the crux of China's policy of good neighborliness and the Harmonious World and peaceful rise strategies.

In the case of China, its contemporary public diplomacy is focusing on building political trust by improving the image of China's political system, its foreign policies, and the human right situation. It has been strengthening its soft-power projection by developing public diplomacy strategies. First of all, China wants to be seen as a stable, reliable, and responsible economic partner, a rising economic power that does not have to be feared.

In particular, Beijing wants China to be seen as a trustworthy and responsible member of the international political community, capable of and willing to contribute actively to world peace. Second, China wants to be acknowledged and respected as an ancient but vibrant culture. Translated into domestic and pragmatic terms, China's public diplomacy has to boost the Chinese Communist Party's legitimacy as China's prime ruler and serve the need of sustainable and steady economic and social development at home.

China is conducting public diplomacy, and it is using its soft power to shape its world future and gain the international identity. China wants to be the real powerhouse of the region, with not only a vast population and unprecedented economic growth but also massive soft-power resources. China's capitalist development with state guidance is somehow perceived as a unique sovereign nation with autonomy and prosperity, although it is in temporary decline for the moment.

1. China's Efforts In Gaining Attractiveness, Identity and Status

China is really trying to influence the views of both its neighbors and the rest of the world.

If you look at China today, which IR scholars describe as a nation in a period of economic stagnation, it is turning very much to soft power and while it is trying to create a positive image or improve its image, it has not been very successful in acquiring a world-wide reputation as a credible partner like the USA or gaining both national and international influence, identity and status. China, once was in isolation, regardless of successes or failures, is taking serious consideration of new images, new ideas and new partners related to foreign policy-making in the fields of public diplomacy. China truly understands the significance of combining hard and soft power in ways that reinforce itself through public diplomacy.

So it really wants to attract both neighbors and distant countries. Unfortunately, for Southeast Asian countries China can be an economic partner and a security threat at the same time. This country's growing economic and military power risks are scaring them and its neighbors into forming counterbalancing coalitions, so China desperately wants a smart strategy that must include efforts to appear less frightening.

China is seeking to increase the nation's international reach and influence. China needs a new source of national & international identity as it wants to become the leader not only in Asia but in the world. Nevertheless, the reality is that China is still embroiled in domestic & ethnic conflicts and poverty. Ethnic polarization, economic stagnation, corruption, gender imbalance, conditions of extreme poverty – things like these hurt Chinese people. At least, Chinese parents are concerned about raising kids in an environment with filthy air, especially in Beijing, and a critical lack of clean water.

There is also a growing trend among China's richest to use their wealth to move themselves and their families abroad, mostly to Christian countries. China's demography is almost as bad as Russia's. They have seen the number of high-school students, drop by about 27 percent in just the last four years. Think also the Baby bust because of the 'One Child policy'! Many have attributed the deficiencies to China's soft power to its domestic weaknesses. The 2015 report by Soft Power 30 Index points out that the lack of democracy, free press, and access to information that many people around the world take for granted weighs heavily on perceptions of China around the world.

Similarly, according to Joseph S. Nye, Jr. University Distinguished Service Professor and former Dean of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, the reason that China's large investment in soft power has had "a limited return" is that China refuses to "unleash the talents of its civil society."

Due to the above-mentioned problems, in reality, less powerful than the USA indeed, China has been struggling to fill its "hard-power deficit" by increasing soft-power resources. China's rapid growth and its public diplomacy & soft power have come to draw much attention from the status-seeking East Asian countries as well as other great powers. One avenue for enhancing a national image and attaining smart power status is the pursuit of public diplomacy, on which China is placing increased emphasis. Chinese authorities are just becoming fully conversant with the significance of conducting public diplomacy for while hard-power resources are used and developed mainly by governments, soft power is largely exerted by various non-state actors, including private sectors and civil societies.

In recent years, the Chinese government has pursued stronger ties with many countries around the world through new foreign policy strategies that increase its attractiveness instead of threats or suspicion. For instance, Armenian language courses are now being offered to Chinese students in another example of the strengthening links between Armenia and China. The courses in Armenian language and culture classes are offered for a second consecutive year at the prestigious Beijing Foreign Studies University (hereafter BFSU) after a successful launch year with many of the enrolled Chinese students expressing the desire to continue their Armenian studies in Armenia. BFSU is one of the most prestigious universities in China and Armenian is currently being taught to more than a dozen Chinese students as their third foreign language.

The Armenian language courses are optional and the fact that it was the students' own choice inspires experts significantly. Besides language courses, the students also get acquainted with Armenian culture and history, watch Armenian movies and listen to Armenian music that gives the governments the opportunity to develop economic relations between Armenia and China. Actually, the Armenian community of China and Hong Kong continues to strengthen Sino-Armenian friendship by the help of public diplomacy.

Moreover, the China-Africa Think Tanks Forum is a more recent attempt by China's soft power efforts to influence the views of Africa's academic elite and opinion leaders. The initiative of the Forum was launched in 2011 by China to create a platform for dialogue and exchange between Chinese and African thinkers. More than a hundred Chinese and African think tank scholars and government officials participated in the Fourth China-Africa Think Tanks Forum, hosted by the South African government in Pretoria. The forum's theme was Africa's Agenda 2063, with the discussion dwelling on the future of Sino-Africa relations and the upcoming Sixth Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Summit in South Africa this December.

The forum is a good example of China's heightened efforts to strengthen its soft power in Africa and to seek influence at an intellectual level on top of its already expanding economic and political footprint. Since the very beginning, soft power has always been regarded by Chinese and foreign observers as the relatively weak link in China's foreign policy, although in the case of Africa, the general public opinion of towards China seems favorable – all 9 African countries included in the Pew 2015 Global Indicator demonstrated favorability of greater than 50% towards China. However, the affinity seems to be evoked more by China's economic charm and political friendship rather than China's cultural or ideological attractiveness.

Unsurprisingly, the China-Africa Think Tanks Forum receives its financial support from China, including through the China Development Bank, one of the most active Chinese financial institutions operating in Africa. China sees the forum as a civil dialogue mechanism as well as a high-end platform for academic and civil society leader exchanges. The goal is clear: "to create a dialogue platform, nurture cooperation, and encourage academic exchanges among Chinese and African scholars" in order to establish a "community of common knowledge and philosophy." Essentially, the Forum is aimed at shaping the African elites' perceptions and understanding of China through direct bilateral communication, without the interference of Western values or idiosyncrasies. The hope is that such intellectual cooperation will have the potential to change or reverse the unfriendly narrative of Chinese activities in Africa. In this framework, the theme of the Think Tanks Forum has been relatively consistent. From the institutionalization of academic/policy dialogues between Chinese and African thinkers to the upgrade of Sino-African relations, the forum strengthens China's soft power campaign to promote Chinese presence in Africa.

The forum also seeks to shape China-Africa economic and political cooperation. During this year's forum, the discussion largely focused on the development trends in Africa after 2015 and how China could enhance its input in the industrial cooperation with African countries. In particular, Chinese participants used the opportunity to promote China's "One Belt, One Road" strategy in Africa and discussed bilateral investment and trade cooperation.

With such an ambitious plan, it remains to be seen how successful China will be. In reality, the forum reinforces Joseph Nye's recent assessment of China's soft power: *China prefers to work with governments as the source of soft power, rather than individuals, the private sector, or civil society.* While the think tank forum seemingly emphasizes think tanks rather than governments, its target eventually lies upon the African elite, rather than the general public at the grassroots level. While influencing the elites' opinions in Africa is important and relatively easy given China's vast resources shaping the local community and average population's view of China is the most challenging task. According to Joseph Nye, China makes the mistake of thinking that government is the main instrument of soft power.

China acknowledges its insufficient soft power influence in Africa, yet traces its failure elsewhere, more to the intellectual and ideological differences between Chinese and Western mindsets. According to the China Academy of Social Sciences, China's soft power deficiency in Africa originates from factors such as the ancient Chinese culture's lack of modern applications, China's weakness in shaping international norms and discourse, different political values, and the lack of public diplomacy in civil society.

When it comes to soft power, China believes that the problem begins with China's "intellectual disadvantage" in Africa. In the Chinese view, prevailing political norms and public opinion in African countries are heavily influenced by those of its former colonial powers. For example, Chinese intellectuals point out that many of the African political and business elites receive their education in the West, causing them to identify more closely with Western culture, ideology, and interests. Therefore, for Chinese culture, political values, and discourse to prevail in Africa, China faces significant psychological, cultural, educational, and communications problem. China has been trying to change and shape the discourse in Africa through various channels.

For example, the famous “Beijing Consensus” (China’s unique economic development model) has been cited as a powerful example of China’s soft power influence in many African states. Intellectual exchange and soft power also call to mind the Confucius Institutes, which are largely seen as a direct application of cultural influence.

China has emphasized soft power as a way to become a more significant player in world affairs and has spent vast sums on international broadcasting, Confucius Institutes, and other means of reaching the rest of the world. So far, China has established 42 Confucius Institutes in 29 African countries, for example, providing thousands of fellowship opportunities to African youth. These institutes have generated far less controversy in Africa than in the West.

China is also struggling to become a major global power not only through its growing military and industrial strength, but also through soft-power tools such as foreign aid and investment, and cultural and educational exchanges. The Chinese government has also been aggressive in promoting China’s cultural and language study programs by establishing those Confucius institutes in many parts of the world, funding educational programs abroad, and increasing the number of international students coming to Chinese universities from 8000 two decades ago to some 120000 in 2007.

As China continues with its economic modernization, the expansion of its share of world trade, the honing of its diplomatic prowess and the value of the Chinese language are increasing. According to Sheng Ding, a professor of Political Science at the Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, today the Chinese language is becoming a fast-developing commercial lingua franca in the Asia Pacific. Hundreds of Russians, Mongolians, Koreans, Japanese, Thais, and even Europeans are learning the Chinese language. For example, only in 2002-2003, more than 180 Mongolian students went to China to learn Chinese at the Chinese government’s full expenses.

The invaluable role of promoting the Chinese language in China’s public diplomacy has not been lost on the Chinese leadership. Beijing has formulated and implemented a sophisticated multi-level strategy to popularize the Chinese language (i.e., Mandarin Chinese) around the world, systematically and on a massive scale. In terms of the strategy, the government of China has done the followings:

First, as an important policy initiative in its education reform, Beijing promulgated the “Studying in China Scheme” in September 2010. The scheme aims to advance the internationalization of China’s education system and enhance the country’s attractiveness to international students. According to a Beijing’s official, in charge of China’s international education cooperation and exchanges, the ultimate goal of the “Studying in China Scheme” is to develop Chinese soft power and to promote its political values, in particular, “the Chinese concept of Harmonious World”, to the outside world. Beijing wants to recruit 500,000 international students to study in China by 2020, with the aim of 150,000 recruits being degree-seeking students. If achieved, this will make China the largest international education hub in Asia. Against this backdrop, China’s uptick in soft power will be sustained by becoming an increasingly popular host country for international students.

Second, Beijing’s efforts to promote the Chinese language and culture hinge on the 51 million overseas Chinese, who have become the indispensable platform for Beijing’s public diplomacy. Many host countries of a large number of overseas Chinese people, such as Australia and New Zealand, expect Chinese to become the most valuable business language other than English in the near future. In addition, China’s Overseas Chinese Affairs Office and its subordinates at all levels of government have collaborated with various overseas Chinese communal organizations to organize multiple language acquisitions and cultural exchange programs for younger overseas Chinese people. Such public diplomacy tactics, built on the close cultural and language bonds between overseas Chinese people and their motherland, have already made significant headway in the local culture and society of many global cities. Indeed, from Russia to Mongolia, from Jakarta to Seoul and on to Vancouver and New York, surging interest in studying Chinese language and culture has become the best gauge of the appeal of Chinese soft power.

More importantly, recognizing the centrality of the language in increasing cultural attractiveness, Beijing has introduced a series of initiatives to promote the study and research of Chinese around the world. The National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, Hanban, was established in 1987 to coordinate China’s efforts to promote the Chinese language and Chinese culture around the world. The two most important programs of Hanban are the Confucius Institutes (hereafter CIs), which target foreign universities and colleges, and Confucius Classrooms (hereafter CCs), which target secondary and primary schools.

They have served as the global-local keystone for China's commercial, cultural, and linguistic proselytization. To a great extent, the spread of CIs and CCs have forged strategic alliances with businesses, industries, governments, and other institutions with an interest in closer and more productive ties with China and the Chinese diaspora. As of the end of 2014, there were 475 CIs and 851 CCs around the world. China has opened about 500 of such institutes in more than 100 countries so far.

According to the data posted in the Hanban's official website, the two largest concentration regions of CIs and CCs are Europe (149 CIs and 153 CCs) and North America (113 CIs and 374 CCs), and among the countries hosting more than ten CIs, all of them with the exception of Thailand are in developed regions. Such a distribution of CIs and CCs reflects not only new development in Chinese emigration but also new changes in Beijing's public diplomacy strategy. As more and more Chinese immigrants settle in North America, Europe, and advanced countries in Pacific Asia, Beijing's efforts to utilize the Chinese language as a means of conducting public diplomacy have become more and more selective in order to advance the country's economic interests and international influence.

Beijing has made good progress in developing its soft power related to bolstering the Chinese language and in enhancing its capability to convert such soft power resources into desired policy outcomes. However, Beijing's Chinese language-related public diplomacy still faces some major hurdles. First, Beijing's efforts to promote the Chinese language and Chinese culture could be overshadowed by China's long history of dominance in East Asia. China's ascendancy as a cultural power is sometimes perceived as threatening by its neighbors. Second, Beijing's increasingly assertive and nationalistic foreign policy could jeopardize public diplomacy efforts which focus on the country's cultural attractiveness. Third, Beijing's public diplomacy in popularizing the Chinese language and culture cannot become a fig leaf for its lack of political legitimacy.

Without real political reform and the rule of law, Beijing will find limits to conducting its Chinese language-related public diplomacy and projecting the appeal of Chinese soft power.

Moreover, in order to modernize its economy and society and to form a credible and seamless partnership with its neighborhood, China is searching for the national identity as well as international identity by linking itself to the outside world, especially to its immediate neighboring countries – Russia, Mongolia, Japan, and Korea. The reason is, though bigger powers, especially the US government, do not want to believe it, Russia and Mongolia are both very influential in the region, particularly, in the whole continent of Asia.

China has boosted their expectations about its potential as the main investor and donor. Beijing has declared principles of respect for national sovereignty and noninterference in domestic affairs, indicating that it will support other countries but will not interfere in their internal affairs, or ask other governments what to do or not to do (“like Washington”, according to many International Relations (IR) scholars).

Following the principle of “*building friendship and partnership with neighbors*”, China has tried to strengthen good-neighborly relations and mutually beneficial cooperation with its neighbors, vigorously carried out regional cooperation to foster a regional environment of peace, stability, equality, mutual trust and win-win progress. In order to reassure countries concerned with China’s rise, Beijing has also declared that it would follow the course of peaceful development and contribute to building a “harmonious world” of sustainable peace and common prosperity.

2. China’s public diplomacy towards its neighbors

China’s soft power and the pursuit of assertive public diplomacy are often questioned because of other states’ concern about the rise of China and domestic distress arising from strong nationalism and the communist unitary political system. One interesting finding is that China was not successful in obtaining favorable feelings from other countries, especially from the United States and Japan, although China did gain relatively high favorable feelings from South Korea, Indonesia, and Vietnam.

Although some have argued that China’s “Good Neighbor” policy has successfully promoted its public diplomacy and soft power, its neighbors still think differently. While China and South Korea are becoming more closely aligned in soft power terms, Japan still remains distant from the neighboring East Asian countries.

For the eternal neighbors of China - Russia and Mongolia – the governments of these two countries clearly want and ‘actually have to keep’ friendly and cooperative relations with China, though their attitudes toward or the view of Chinese mentality are not often as positive as are sometimes assumed. Mongolian history, in particular, seems to have left its big mark on China’s reputation. Historical grievances and memories of past experiences are still running deep, casting forward shadows and lead to a variety of negative reactions about China, at least, including a strong tendency to see China’s trade practices as unfair. Although, China is Mongolia’s biggest trading partner and China’s overall economic and trade interests in Mongolia are considerable, yet a majority of Mongolians still accuse China of practicing “unfair trade”. Because of its landlocked location, there were very few trading partners so Mongolians were thrown back on China’s goods.

Paradoxically enough, Mongolians have been a source of inspiration and admiration for others in Asia and Europe. The geographical location at the cross junction of Central Asia, North-East Asia, Far East, China, and Russia has signified the strategic importance of Mongolia. Having an area as big as 1,567,000 sq. km, with only about 3 million people, its significance lies in the territory rather than in the population. The strategic geographical location eventually contributed much to the shaping of its distinct nomadic civilization and determining the nature and course of its history at least since the XIII century when Chinghis Khan united the warring Mongol tribes into a military force. Their expansion at that time was considered to be the most significant impact of nomadic peoples of Inner Asia on the sedentary world. In fact, the Mongolians led campaigns not only threatened the security of major settled regions of the Eurasian continent but also brought a vast zone stretching from the China Sea to the banks of Dnieper under the unified Mongol rule led by Chinghis Khan himself and later on by his successors. Consequently, the Mongols also ruled the territories inhabited by both the Russians and the Chinese for almost a century.

Large majorities of Mongolians from all walks of life have been saying that protecting their land and protecting ‘Mongol blood’ from the Chinese is “the Great commission” from Chinghis Khan, because the great king himself was very well aware of Chinese ‘soft power-soft trick’, which was more like every trick in the book. According to the old Chinese adage, one Mongol man is worth ten Chinese men.

There is also a Chinese saying that if every single person in China just throws his or her hat down over Mongolia, they will be able to cover the whole population of Mongolia with their hats.

Thus, it is felt that more efforts should be made to yield greater benefits in better understanding and bilateral relationships between Mongolians and Chinese. Mongolia is formerly known as "Outer Mongolia" until 1924, and from 1924 to 1992 as the "Mongolian People's Republic (MPR). Generally, Mongolians hold negative views of the Chinese people. In blunt terms, Mongolia's relationship with China has been double-edged as it has had a distinctly negative side. There were a number of incidents that made Mongolians and the Chinese mistrust each other no end, indeed. That's why both Mongolians and Russians tend to worry about several aspects of China's economic power and economic behavior, including Chinese-human behavior.

Mongolia is one of the countries where circumstances are not propitious and still has fledgling democracies. It needs to improve governance as Mongolia is still in corruption and considered as one of those poorly governed countries. Yet, many Mongolians believe that their ancestors - ancient Mongolians had been called by GOD during the Chinghis Khan's time, and so today's Mongolia is still the same which is GOD's will and protection. The reason is Mongolia has been one of the very few ancient countries that still existed up today since its establishment, and Mongolians are one of the fewest nations on earth that have still been living independently in the world today, and so this country has 'special providence' like the USA, South Korea, and other countries. Unfortunately, albeit, the 'United States of Mongolia' established by the Great Chinghis Khan, was divided by Chinese fraud and many other factors, and finally end up as 'Divided States of Mongolia'!

Nowadays Mongolia is the 7th largest country in Asia in terms of its territory but has a population of nearly 3 million which means it is one of the smallest. Its significance, however, lies in the territory rather than in the population. Bordered by Siberia in the north and Gobi desert in the south and surrounded by two powerful neighbors, Mongolia has had a peculiar geo-strategic situation of being landlocked as mentioned above.

So, the situation of Mongolia is like a buffer between two giant neighbors – Russia and China. Historical records suggest that China and Central Asia being the two nearest neighbors of the Mongols had greater and longer exposure than other regions to the descendants of Chinghis Khan. The Mongolians still find a lot to inspire them in the record of their past, but regretfully, government officials do not want to learn from the mistakes of our past.

3. China's public diplomacy practice towards America and other countries

In the XXI century, China has taken a more global and active foreign policy approach under Xi Jinping. In late 2012, President Xi defined the so-called 'China Dream' as achieving a great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation: *China should become a prosperous and strong country that satisfies its people's wish for a good life*. However, what 'prosperous and strong China' means to the outside world remains obscure. Chinese references to a 'new type of major power relations' indicates that Chinese policymakers see China as a great power. In the economic realm, the scope and scale of economic involvement have taken a leap forward with the launch of the One Belt, One Road initiative, and the establishment of the New Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. In the security realm, China's military build-up and maritime disputes in the East and South China Seas raise question marks concerning China's peaceful development. Domestically Xi Jinping has centralized power and tightened censorship. Regions are striving for more independence. China needs to take care of its rapidly aging population while dealing with a slowing GDP growth. Environmental degradation continues and raises increasing dissatisfaction and protest.

China has been making major efforts to increase its ability to influence other countries without force or coercion. In 2007, then President Hu Jintao told the Communist Party that the country needed to increase its soft power; President Xi Jinping repeated the same message last year. They mean China needs a smart strategy and is making every effort to appear less frightening. But their soft-power ambitions still face major obstacles. To be sure, China's efforts have had some impact. As it enrolls countries as members of its Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and doles out billions of dollars of aid during state visits abroad, some observers worry that, when it comes to soft power, China could actually be taking the lead over countries such as the USA.

David Shambaugh, an American sinologist estimates that China spends roughly US\$10 billion (S\$13,7 billion) a year in external propaganda. By comparison, the US spent only \$665 million on public diplomacy last year. However, the billions of dollars China is spending on its charm offensive have had only a limited return. Polls in North America, Europe, India, and Japan show that opinions about China's influence are predominantly negative.

Nevertheless, the country is viewed more positively in Latin America and Africa where it has no territorial disputes and human-rights concerns, which are not always high on the public agenda. But even in many countries in those regions, Chinese practices such as importing labor for infrastructure projects are unpopular. China has emphasized its cultural and economic strengths, but it has paid less attention to the political aspects that can undermine its efforts.

When it comes to foreign policy, the American people vote for not the party with the most ambitious vision but the party with the soberest and realistic one. As the White House prepares to host Chinese President Xi Jinping for his first state visit to the US in September 2015, the American public continues to see a number of issues related to China and its rising power as major concerns. In particular, economic issues loom large. China's growth rate has slowed, its stock markets have recently plummeted and it is facing a variety of economic challenges, but Americans are still concerned about economic threats posed by China – especially the amount of U.S. debt held by Beijing, the U.S.-China trade deficit and the loss of American jobs to China. But it's not just economic issues that trouble Americans. They are also worried about cyber-attacks, Beijing's human rights record, China's impact on the environment and its growing military strength. On many of these issues, there is a sharp partisan divide, with Republicans expressing stronger concerns than either Democrats or independents.

According to the key findings of a new Pew Research Center survey, conducted among 1,003 respondents in the U.S. from April 13 to May 3, 2015, large majorities of Americans say all eight of the issues included in the survey are at least a somewhat serious problem for the U.S. And 7 of these issues are considered serious by roughly eight-in-ten or more of those polled.

All 3 economic issues are rated as very serious problems by roughly half or more of the American public. Two-in-three says a large amount of U.S. debt held by China (\$1.27 trillion) is a very serious problem, and six-in-ten hold this view about the loss of jobs to Chinese people. Concerns about job losses are especially common among older Americans, women, people with less education, those with lower incomes and Republicans. About half (52%) consider the trade deficit, which totaled \$31.6 billion in July, a very serious problem.

Even though economic issues continue to shape how Americans see China, there is slightly less concern about these perceived threats than there was three years ago, when Pew Research Center asked these questions. Since 2012, the share of the public describing the debt issue (-11 percentage points), job losses (-11) and the trade deficit (-9) as very serious concerns has declined significantly. The current survey was conducted before revelations in June that U.S. federal workers had been targeted by cyber-attacks that many experts believe originated in China. Even so, 54% of Americans consider cyber-attacks from China a very serious problem. And roughly half say the same about Beijing's human rights policies, the country's environmental impact and its increasing military power, which was showcased in Beijing with a major military parade commemorating the end of World War II.

China has already become an issue in the 2016 Republican presidential contest, and as the new survey reveals, worries about China are especially prevalent among GOP supporters. For instance, 77% of Republicans say that a large amount of U.S. debt held by China is a very serious problem, compared with 60% of Democrats. Republicans are significantly more concerned than Democrats about six of the eight issues on the survey. The exceptions are human rights, where there is no significant partisan difference, and China's impact on the environment, which generates more worries among Democrats.

Overall ratings for China are relatively unchanged since last year. 54% of Americans have an unfavorable view of China, while just 38% hold a favorable opinion. In each Pew Research Center survey since 2013, roughly half or more of those surveyed have expressed a negative view of China. Prior to 2013, the most negative rating for China was 42% in 2008.

As is generally the case for views about China on specific issues, there is a notable partisan gap on the overall favorability measure. 63% of Republicans, 51% of independents and 50% of Democrats give China an unfavorable rating. Negative assessments of China are also more common among older Americans. Fully 64% of those ages 50 and older have a negative opinion, while just 39% hold this view among people under age 30.²

² Source: Pew Research Center survey, conducted among 1,003 respondents in the U.S. from April 13 to May 3, 2015.

According to some scholars, China represents and will remain the most significant competitor to the United States for decades to come. As such, the need for a more coherent U.S. response to increasing Chinese power is long overdue. Because the American effort to 'integrate' China into the liberal international order has now generated new threats to not only its neighboring countries, such as Mongolia, South Korea, and Japan, but also to U.S. primacy in Asia, and could result in a consequential challenge to American power globally.

So, US scholars say that Washington needs a new grand strategy toward China that centers on balancing the rise of Chinese power rather than continuing to assist its ascendancy. Some international relations scholars argue that such a strategy is designed to limit the dangers that China's geo-economic and military power pose to U.S. national interests in Asia and globally, even as the US and its allies maintain diplomatic and economic interactions with China. The debate about the future of U.S-China relations is currently being driven by a more assertive Chinese foreign & security policy over the last decade: about the region's reaction to this, and Washington's response the pivot, or rebalance to Asia.

China's public diplomacy practice towards America presents different characteristics. US scholars analyze the conditions and constraints of China's public diplomacy towards America and put forward some countermeasures and suggestions. Strengthening of the attraction of traditional Chinese culture and Chinese language to American people, growing of China's international influence and increasingly close relation between China and America create the conditions on which China implements public diplomacy towards America. Nevertheless, cultural difference, human rights issues, and China threat theory still exist, restricting implementation of China's public diplomacy toward America.

As some predict, when it comes to soft power, China could actually be taking the lead over countries such as the USA; because an economically and diplomatically exhausted the United States might have been losing its staying power in the Pacific.

4. Summary and concluding remarks

Throughout the XX century, governments, like China's, came to increasingly appreciate the value of public diplomacy and soft power to help them achieve their foreign policy ambitions.

With the increasing role of Chinese growth and the size of East Asian economies, which are projected to surpass that of all Europe and to some extent the United States, therefore it is no wonder that some Asian bigger economies, like China, India, or Indonesia are likely to be good candidates for developing soft power as foreign policy tools. Public diplomacy and soft power are now considered as the most efficient diplomatic practice not only in East Asia but also in all across the world. In the first decade of the XXI century, bigger and middle power governments have started to admit that public diplomacy and soft power can both smooth and sharpen diplomatic divides and strengthen the relations between countries and nations. They have begun to recognize that mutual trust – listening & saying - is the main ingredient of public diplomacy, and one avenue to enhancing the national and international image, gaining the internationally recognized identity and soft power status is the pursuit of public diplomacy.

The Chinese Government is conducting public diplomacy through different ways, hoping to solve its problems. China has emphasized soft power through public diplomacy dimensions as a way to become a more significant player in world affairs, but unfortunately, the soft power tools that China wields are mostly manufactured by the government. China is mistakenly thinking that government is the main instrument of soft power. In today's world, attention, attitude and honesty contribute to public diplomacy efficiency. Indeed, such virtues depend on credibility. Government propaganda and government guidance like in China is rarely credible. Although China is most often cited as the leading superpower for the coming century, it remains weak in science and technological innovation.

Chinese President Xi Jinping is making a big priority of public diplomacy, and trusts its contribution to deal with an increasingly fractured world, but it has not yet seemed to win many hearts and minds especially in the immediate neighbors and bigger powers as well. However, China is enjoying an overwhelming advantage that grows stronger with each passing day. The Chinese government even suggests that its experience may have something to offer to current thinking on public diplomacy. This means, by handing out 'carrots' and hiding its 'stick', by linking the nation to the outside world through some public diplomacy practices such as the exchange programs, Confucius institutes and other soft power policies which have been the engine of diplomatic relations with other countries, China hopes to increase their image and international reputation that has been positively associated with its international identity.

Chinese leaders think that public diplomacy through cultural and educational exchanges and language training can pave the way for innovations in Chinese diplomatic practice. They agree that public diplomacy might help to make changes in Chinese attitudes to diplomacy and diplomatic relationship with other countries, in the real sense. Thanks to its public diplomacy, China's aid programs are often successful and constructive. Its economy is strong enough, and its traditional culture is being widely admired. But if the country is to realize its enormous soft power potential, it will have to rethink its policies at home and abroad, limiting its claims upon its neighbors and learning to accept criticism in order to unleash the full talents of its civil society. As long as China fans the flames of nationalism and holds tight the reins of party control, its public diplomacy, and soft power will always remain limited.

In conclusion, China is conducting public diplomacy, and it is using its soft power to shape its world future and gain an international identity. Of course, this study has a limitation as the role and the importance of conducting public diplomacy may change over time. What must be learned from this study is the conduct of public diplomacy has to do with preserving the peace and cooperation. Preserving the peace will be critical not only for the three billion Asian people but also for the future of the global community. International relations scholars, academics, and politicians believe that much of the history of the XXI century will be written in Asia. So this will be shaped by the USA, China, Russia, and even Mongolia, as they all share the same world.

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